

February 20, 1952

Mr. Ben May  
P.O. Box 1186  
Mobile 7, Alabama

Dear Mr. May:

I thank you for sending me another article on sickle cell anemia.

I am especially glad to have an extra copy of this paper, because one of the authors, Dr. Herman Branson, worked for a year with me.

You may be interested to know that I have been making tentative plans toward the foundation of a research institute in molecular medicine. You remember that sickle cell anemia is the first disease to have been shown clearly to be a molecular disease. Since this knowledge was obtained, Dr. Harvey Itano in our laboratories has found two other diseases that are molecular diseases - both of them are hereditary hemolytic anemias, involving an abnormality of the hemoglobin molecule. Thus we now have three diseases that are based upon abnormal hemoglobin molecules. I think that it is likely that many other diseases of importance are also molecular diseases, and that a more vigorous attack should be made on the problem of disease in relation to molecular structure than is being made at present. Of course, the way for such an attack to be made is through the foundation of a research institute devoted to this problem - presumably set up in close association with a university or scientific school.

For about ten years I have had in mind the possibility that a medical research institute should be set up close by the California Institute of Technology, and I now feel more strongly than ever that great contributions could be made to human welfare through such an action. No significant step has been taken yet, however, toward the foundation of this institute. I would be grateful to you if you would give me the benefit of your opinions and ideas along these lines.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Linus Pauling:W

P.S. It seems to me that the molecular attack is apt to provide results of significance to the degenerative and the malignant ~~diseases~~ which are now the principal causes of death.

L.F.